STATEMENT OF

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Environmental and Safety Impacts of Nanotechnology: What Research is Needed?
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2318 Rayburn House Office Building

The promise of nanotechnology is startling. Benefits are anticipated in every facet of our lives; medicine, energy production, and electronics may be revolutionized by nanotechnology. But with this promise, there is also growing concern that the potential short and long-term impacts of nanomaterials on people and the environment are largely unknown. The very properties that make nanomaterials so promising in applications – their small size, large surface area, and unusual behavior when compared to their macro-scale materials -- make them potentially troubling when they come in contact with people and the environment. That is why today's hearing is so important.

I look forward to hearing today from our witnesses about these potential risks. What do we know now about these risks? What additional research is needed? What are the federal government and the private sector doing to answer these questions? Are we looking at the potential risks across the entire lifecycle of nanomaterials – manufacture, use and disposal?

As we move forward with our federal investments in nanotechnology, we need to maintain the public's trust. That will require smart investments in research, accurate assessments of risk, and steady communication with the public about what researchers know and don't know. It will also require that environmental research and an appropriate regulatory framework for nanotechnology keep pace with the rapid growth of innovation and discovery. Without open communication and a trustworthy regulatory framework, misinformation and unfounded fear could undermine the potential economic rewards of nanotechnology.

I am happy that our witnesses represent a cross-section of stakeholders, because cooperation will be a necessary part of both conducting research and sharing its results with the public. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how much we know on this topic and how much we still have to learn.